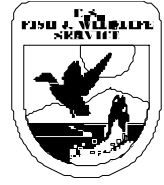


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News Release



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Public Information Meeting Scheduled on Bull Trout Critical Habitat Proposal

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will host a public meeting Wednesday, March 3, on its proposal to revise critical habitat for the bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), a threatened species protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The meeting will be from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Water Resources Education Center, 4600 SE Columbia Way, Vancouver, Washington 98668.

A formal presentation will begin at 6:15 p.m., followed by a question-and-answer period and an opportunity to review maps and talk with biologists. No formal testimony will be taken but written comments will be accepted.

In total, the Service proposes to designate approximately 22,679 miles of streams and 533,426 acres of lakes and reservoirs in as critical habitat for the wide-ranging fish. The proposal includes 985 miles of marine shoreline in Washington. If finalized, the proposal would increase the amount of stream miles designated as bull trout critical habitat in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana and Nevada by 18,851 miles and the amount of lakes and reservoirs designated as critical habitat by 390,208 acres.

Developed by a team of federal scientists, the proposal is intended to provide sufficient habitat to allow for genetic and life-history diversity, ensure bull trout are well distributed across representative habitats, ensure sufficient connectivity among populations and allow for the ability to address threats facing the species.

More information on the Service's proposal to revise critical habitat for bull trout can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/bulltrout>

Comments on the proposed critical habitat revision and the draft economic analysis will be accepted until March 15, 2010. They can be submitted by one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>.

In the box that reads "Enter Keyword or ID," enter the docket number for this proposed rule, which is FWS-R1-ES-2009-0085. Check the box that reads "Open for Comment/Submission," and then click the Search button. You should then see an icon that reads "Submit a Comment." Please ensure that you have found the correct rulemaking before submitting your comment.

- *U.S. mail or hand-delivery:* Public Comments Processing, Attn: RIN 1018-AW88; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 222; Arlington, VA 22203.

- Hand deliver written comments at a public informational meeting.

Bull trout are members of the char subgroup of the salmon family, which also includes the Dolly Varden, lake trout, and Arctic char. They can grow to more than 30 pounds in lakes, but in streams rarely exceed 4 pounds. They have small, pale yellow to crimson spots on a darker background, which ranges from olive green to brown above, fading to white on the belly. Historically, bull trout occurred throughout the Columbia River Basin, east to western Montana, south to the Jarbidge River in northern Nevada, the Klamath Basin in Oregon, the McCloud River in California and north to Alberta, British Columbia, and possibly southeastern Alaska. Bull trout are still widely distributed but they have declined in overall distribution and abundance. Small bull trout eat terrestrial and aquatic insects but shift to preying on other fish as they grow larger.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov